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Bryan Administration Launches Survey to Gauge USVI's Readiness for Telehealth

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The Bryan administration on Monday launched what is being called the "USVI Telehealth Provider Survey" to gauge how ready local doctors and healthcare providers are to use technology aimed at extending providers' reach "beyond traditional clinical settings."

The announcement is part of Governor Bryan's "Healthier Horizons Initiative", according to a release Government House issued Monday. Telehealth is the distribution of health-related services and information via electronic information and telecommunication technologies.

Government House said the survey was emailed to doctors and healthcare providers today across the territory and is also accessible online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VITelehealth>. The online survey takes five minutes to complete and can be submitted via a desktop, tablet or smart

phone, according to the release.

All responses are confidential, the administration said. The deadline to submit the survey is Monday, Nov. 2.

“I’m urging every doctor and healthcare provider to take the USVI Telehealth Provider Survey so that we can have a clear picture of how much work needs to be done to deliver telehealth services for Virgin Islands residents,” said Mr. Bryan. “The ultimate goal is to promote the use of telehealth, especially in the wake of COVID-19, where traveling, even between islands, is a cause for concern for everyone, not only high-risk patients.”

The telehealth survey is designed to assess telehealth capacity and identify gaps, such as training of IT staff; technology needs; software and hardware; and to provide baseline information as the Administration works towards the development of the territory’s first-ever Health Information Exchange (HIE), according to the release.

“We are recommending that a senior administrator within a doctor or healthcare provider’s office complete the survey, because questions cover areas such as general facility information, telehealth capacity and HIE capacity,” said Dr. Julia Sheen, health and human services policy advisor to the governor. “We need maximum participation for us to truly understand our needs, and I join the governor in urging the medical community to participate.”

According to the administration, since January, Dr. Sheen has been working with key stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as part of the V.I. Telehealth Workgroup, to lay the groundwork for making telehealth services in the U.S. Virgin Islands a reality. The Workgroup is leading the coordination of telehealth services among healthcare providers and will spearhead the regulation and implementation of the HIE, according to the release.

Their work is focused on policy and regulation, including Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement, malpractice insurance coverage, licensing of providers, and the implementation of enabling legislation, Government House said.

The Healthier Horizons Initiative includes telehealth and 10 other projects to create a comprehensive health care system for Virgin Islanders by broadening the scope of health services provided to residents, increasing patient access to quality care and hardening the healthcare infrastructure.